

**Paper Swans Press**

**The  
Chronicles  
of Eye**



# The Chronicles of Eve



## **The Chronicles of Eve**

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# KATH OSGERBY

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## FEEDING THE HOBBY-HORSE

The lowering of voices over the fence  
was always a sign  
to stop feeding the hobby-horse head -  
stuffed lisle stocking  
on redundant sweeping-brush shank -  
and a nudge  
to tune in to grown-up conversations.

*It's an absolute disgrace,  
a dress like that,  
and everything she's got hanging out.*

Bedecked in the floral print  
of bias-bound wrap-around pinnies,  
Grandma and Aunty Lilian  
folded their arms  
and heaved their swaddled chests  
upwards and outwards  
as far as Mother Nature would allow.

*Bet you, Cynthia, bet you any money  
she doesn't use them  
the way they were meant to be used.*

# SARAH JAMES

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## FORGET BEEF, FORGET CHICKEN

On the day you decide, you open  
the fridge and notice how his choices  
have overpowered your tastes.

You take out the eggs.  
Each shell cracked now  
is a spillage whisked to lightness.

One finely sliced onion. The tip  
of your knife presses down on a pepper:  
the red curves of clean cuts.

Throw this in the pan's sizzle.  
Let pale cubes of potato fry  
in these fiery Spanish juices.

Watch heat shape this to a moon  
as big as your plate, thicker  
than your paper tongue, softer

than his steak, and speckled  
with spice. Reclaim your share.  
Eat only as much as you like.



# JOHN FOGGIN

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## ALL OVER NOW (BABY BLUE)

Molly Shuttleworth was –they’d drop their voices – delicate. Still lived with her father, though her sister Doreen got herself married. Let them get on with it.

*Delicate.* A word like lace, or the print of old novels. Pale distracted characters who’d leave the action early. Little women. *Not long for this world.* Women’s talk

was puzzling. ‘Long’ was a washing line or a walk you might think twice about. Then they’d drop their voices, like Catholics under parliament:

*She were,* someone like Mrs Cox would say, *born blue.* *A blue baby. Aye.* They’d shake their heads. A solidarity of secrets shared, and deep deep understandings

of this world, its vagaries, and, I think now, a relish that it wasn’t them or theirs born blue, and *delicate.* Not something you could ask about. Something women knew.

Jelly babies bothered me. Why none of them were blue.

# ARIEL DAWN

---

## LIFE DRAWING

Not naked, he says, nude. Not you, womanhood. He gives directions, and his grey eyes drive my body to the most aesthetically pleasing position: left hip and elbow on the paint-stained rug, sky-lit.

This happens in an alley. Outside the window is another window, and a room behind wicker baskets: sun shadows play inside. I wait for someone to open the door and see I'm naked as a child or an animal. My posture is hollow. My lover didn't want my love.

He snaps his fingers to draw my mind back to the rug, the aching hip and sleeping leg. He reveals the drawing. No line between skin and air, a charcoal blur, the woman barely formed, half-there. He offers it to me, yet when I ask for his signature, he laughs and closes the door.

# CAROLE BROMLEY

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## MUM'S FOOT

You'd walk again  
if they'd let you go home.  
They say *Maybe*.

*Not yet*. Now your foot  
won't stay put under  
the sheet and when I try

to lift it the skin's dry  
and cold like it says  
on page eight of the leaflet.

I can't meet your eye  
for the guilt of not  
making it happen.

I talk to your foot,  
hold it, stroke it,  
say sorry to it.

So thin, so white,  
the foot of the girl  
in the photo, laughing

and running full  
pelt towards the sea.

# JESSICA MOOKHERJEE

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## DAWN CHORUS

He saw me in a late night shop  
buying Marlboro Lights.  
I only remember his beard - nothing else,  
I didn't think about how he looked  
at me.  
He asked me out for dinner -  
what went through my mind was did I look  
like I needed feeding  
or just like someone who'd say yes  
to a chicken dinner.  
I didn't know then, that to all men  
a seventeen year old girl is beautiful -  
even with ample flesh, spiked purple hair  
and art school clothes.  
I can't remember a single thing about him,  
just the taste of the chicken fricassee,  
the cushions of the limousine and the dawn chorus,  
before light  
as he drove me home.

# VICTORIA GATEHOUSE

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## BURNING MOUTH SYNDROME

The doctor says it's nothing serious, something she'll just have to live with, a malfunction of the nerves perhaps, not uncommon in women of her age and she leaves with a script for a mild antidepressant, a leaflet counselling moderation in alcohol, tobacco and spicy foods and when she returns, he says it again after taking a look at lips, teeth and tongue – 'nothing to see' and he says it with a smile when she can feel the bees humming in her blood, the tips of their wings chafing artery walls and she knows without being told they're house bees, the ones who feed, clean and ventilate the hive, pack nectar into the comb without really tasting it, the ones who wait for mid-life to take their first orientation flights and she can really feel the smart of them, the bees in her blood, unfurling their proboscises to touch the corolla of her heart. So many years spent licking out hives, all the burn of it here on her tongue and they're starting to forage now, to suck sweetness into their honey stomachs, and the doctor he'll keep telling her it's nothing when they're rising like stings, the words she's kept in.

# ALISON STONE

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## SEX TALK AMONG WOMEN

On the way back from the Hamptons  
we argue about language and sex,

how speech reduces women to the status  
of a wall plate waiting for a plug.

*Nail, screw, drive, thrust, penetrate, and pork.*  
We build our lives with words

and yet have never heard or read *engulf,*  
*surround, enfold.*

We who last night bared  
our bodies in the whirlpool are now divided

by the description of a penis.  
*You put the cover on the mayonnaise jar;*

*you don't put the jar in the cover.*  
*Yeah, but you put the jar in the refrigerator.*

*A refrigerator is a big, dumb, cold thing.*  
*Don't be angry -- that's so Seventies.*

A circle of women, we sat in steam  
celebrating beauty and differences,

the sizes of our breasts, the flatness  
or curve of bellies, the shades

---

of our pubic hair.

Voices rise and sharpen.

We miss our exit bickering,  
ask directions at a deli

selling *Let Christ Help You Beat Temptation*  
bumper stickers, day-glo condoms, cans of worms.